

README.WRI for Action! 3.0 for Windows

Revision date: May 20, 1994

This document contains information that is not in the Action! User's Guide or the Action! online help. Read this document to find out about issues, and learn tips for using Action! successfully.

Guided Tour

When you install Action!, the guided tour is installed into your Macromedia program group. When you click the icon, the Action! Player loads and begins playing the guided tour. Because of the size of the tour, it may take a while to load on slower systems.

Video Drivers Installed with This Release

This installation includes the runtime video drivers for Autodesk Animator 1.1, Microsoft Video for Windows 1.1a and Apple QuickTime for Windows 1.1.1. If you choose to install these files, they are installed into your \WINDOWS\SYSTEM subdirectory. Modifications are made to your WIN.INI and SYSTEM.INI to enable these files to work correctly. Before modifications are made, a backup copy of WIN.INI and SYSTEM.INI are made under the names WININI.WAS and SYSINI.WAS respectively.

Removing Action! 3.0 and the Video Support Files

IMPORTANT NOTE: These steps assume you have not installed any software since you installed Action! 3.0. If you have installed other software, you may encounter problems, particularly if the other software you've installed modifies WIN.INI or SYSTEM.INI.

If you wish to remove Action! 3.0 and the associated video support files, here are the steps to follow:

- 1.) Exit out of Windows back to the DOS prompt.
- 2.) Delete everything in the subdirectory where you installed Action! 3.0. By default, this subdirectory is C:\ACTION30.
- 3.) Change to your Windows subdirectory (typically this is C:\WINDOWS). Copy the file SYSINI.WAS to SYSTEM.INI. Copy the files WININI.WAS to WIN.INI. This will restore your Windows initialization files as they were before you installed Action! 3.0.
- 4.) Within the Windows subdirectory, remove the following files:
 - ACTION3.INI
 - QTW.INI
 - INDEO.INI
 - AAWIN.EXE
- 5.) Change to the SYSTEM subdirectory below the WINDOWS subdirectory. Remove the following files:

For Autodesk Animator: AAPLAY.DLL, AAVGA.DLL, MCIAAP.DRV.

For Apple QuickTime for Windows: MCIQTENU.DLL, MCIQTFRA.DLL, PLAYENU.DLL, PLAYFRA.DLL, QTCVID.DLL, QTHNDLR.DLL, QTIM.DLL, QTIMCMGR.DLL, QTOLE.DLL, QTVHDW.DLL, VIEWENU.DLL, VIEWFRA.DLL, MCIQTW.DRV, QTNOTIFY.EXE, VIEWER.EXE, QCMC.QTC, QTCVID.QTC, QTJPEG.QTC, QTRAW.QTC, QTRLE.QTC, QTRPZA.QTC, QTRT21.QTC, QTSMC.QTC.

For Microsoft Video for Windows: IMAADPCM.ACM, MSADPCM.ACM, ACMCMPRS.DLL, AVICAP.DLL, AVIFILE.DLL, DISPDIB.DLL, IR21_R.DLL, IR30.DLL, MCIOLE.DLL, MSACM.DLL, MSVIDEO.DLL, STORAGE.DLL, ICCVID.DRV, INDEOV.DRV, MCIAVI.DRV, MSACM.DRV, MSRLE.DRV, MSVIDC.DRV, PROFDISP.EXE, MAP_WIN.HLP.

Video Card Compatibility Issues

Like all multimedia applications, Action! is video-intensive; it will put your video card through its paces and may flush out some problems. Action! has been tested with many of the most popular video cards on the market. The following list is a brief summary of test results with some of these cards.

Cards tested with no known problems:

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ATI Graphics Ultra Pro VLB (using the driver released in April, 1994)
Actix - Prostar VL, Graphics Engine Ultra VL Plus
Diamond - Viper VLB
Hercules - Graphite, Dynamite
Mediavision - Prographics 1280
Genoa - Windows VGA 24
Number Nine - 9GXe Level 10
Orchid - Kelvin 64
Trident - 8900c 256color

Cards tested: Problems found:

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ATI - Graphics Ultra Pro ISA 1
Color Designer - A3 CL 5428 1
Compaq - Qvision 1, 3, 4
Diamond - Stealth Pro 2
Diamond Speedstar Plus ISA & VLB 1
Orchid Fahrenheit 1280 1
Orchid Fahrenheit VA 1
Sigma Designs - Winstorm 1
Toshiba - Phoenix VGA 1
Western Digital - Paradise VGA 1

Problem key

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1. Color map problems. These are minor but can be annoying to color-savvy artists.
2. Scroll bars and the Action ! timeline look strange when using large fonts in 800x600 or 1024x768 resolution.
3. Bitmaps larger than your stage might be corrupted when they are imported into Action!
4. Lines 1-pixel wide are corrupted. If you experience this problem, avoid using one-pixel wide lines and object borders. Alternatively, add the line "BrokenLineDrawingWorkaround=1" to your ACTION3.INI file (located in the Windows system directory); however, this will slow down animation performance.

The current early version of the ATI Mach 64 video card, when used with QuickTime for Windows, experiences a crash when starting Action! To prevent this, edit your SYSTEM.INI to include the following line in the [MacX] section of SYSTEM.INI:

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[MacX]  
DeviceBitmap=Off
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Older versions of the drivers for the ATI Mach 32 video card experience intermittent crashes in charting, and in scenes that contain many complex polygons. If you have this video card, we recommend that you upgrade to driver version 2.3 (or newer).

The Dell S3 video card may crashe drawing complex animated charts. If you experience crashes with this video card, contact the video card vendor to get the latest driver.

To get complete information about video cards that have been tested with Action!, contact Macromedia in one of the following ways:

- 1.) To receive information by FAX, call 1-800-449-3329 or 415-863-4409 and request MacroFacts document number 3305.
- 2.) To receive information by mail, call Macromedia Tech Support at 415-252-9080 and request MacroFacts document number 3305.
- 3.) On CompuServe and America On-line, check the general library of the Macromedia Forum.

Sound Card Compatibility Issues

Action! has been tested with many of the sound cards on the market and is compatible with most all, especially for simple sounds. The SoundBlaster Pro may not operate well with Action! with some drivers. Our testing has revealed some incompatibilities with SBPSND.DRV dated Feb 25, 1994. These will show up during complex sound sequences or sounds and movie/video combinations.

Memory Issues

Although 4MB of memory (RAM) is the minimum to run Action!, 8MB is highly recommended. Like most other current Windows applications, performance will be slow if you run Action! with less than the recommended 8MB of memory. If you plan to use OLE2 extensively, you may need more than 8MB, since you will be running both Action! and the OLE2 server application.

To optimize playback performance on a machine with less than 8MB of memory, follow these guidelines:

1. If your video card can support multiple display resolutions, choose 640 X 480, 256 colors (8-bit) rather than higher resolutions. This limits the amount of memory required to display animations in Action! Note that this contradicts the authoring tip later in this document: if your computer has 8MB or more, do not restrict your display resolution.
2. Because ACTION.EXE contains many more interface elements (toolbars, control panels, and so on), it consumes more memory than the Action! Player does (PLAYACT.EXE). Therefore, playback performance in the Player is much better than in Action! itself. When you are ready to make your presentation on a machine with limited memory, save your presentation as a Player file in Action!, exit from Action!, and play the presentation from the Action! Player.
3. Maximize the amount of memory available by limiting the number of tools that consume extended / expanded memory. Make sure that you are not using the DOS SMARTDRV and RAMDRIVE extensions. These extensions are loaded in either your CONFIG.SYS or AUTOEXEC.BAT file. For more information, please consult your Windows system documentation.

Windows limits the amount of scratch memory available for object motion and effects such as wipes and dissolves. Long scenes with complicated effects consume a lot of scratch memory, as do high screen resolutions and high color depth. When scratch memory is low, some effects may be skipped or there may be a Windows crash (usually in GDI.EXE). To avoid this problem, break up scenes with many complicated effects into separate scenes, or reduce the number and complexity of the effects. Dissolves, covers, and reveals are particularly complicated effects.

Altering Mouse Button Playback

Normally during playback, Action! allows the left and right mouse buttons to pause and restart playback, respectively. This may be undesirable for some applications, such as unattended kiosks or touch-screen displays. Adding the line "DisableMousePause=1" to your ACTION3.INI file (located in the Windows system directory) will disable the use of the mouse buttons to control pauses. The mouse can still be used to click on interactive objects, and the Enter and spacebar keys will still pause and restart playback.

Autodesk Animator (FLI and FLC) Movie Issues

Duplicating a scene containing a FLI or FLC while in the scene sorter may cause the movie to appear on top of the scene sorter. This is a temporary problem.

FLI and FLC movies always appear as the topmost item on the stage, overwriting even the tool palettes. This is unavoidable; it's the way the Autodesk Animator video driver writes to the screen.

Player Issues

Check your video card color depth before you create a Player file. If you are in a high color depth like 16 million colors, your Player file (.ACP) will become much larger than your .ACT file. To keep the player file small, change to 256 colors and then save the Player file.

The Action! Player does not support display of OLE objects. However, when you save your presentation as a Player file (.ACP), OLE objects are converted to static pictures. These objects can be seen, but cannot be edited or played. For example, if you insert a Media Player object, such as a Video for Windows movie, only the iconic representation will be shown. If you plan to use the Action! Player to display Video for Windows movies, do not insert them as OLE objects, but import the movie directly. If you do wish to display OLE linked objects, you should play your presentation using ACTION.EXE.

If you distribute a presentation that includes video files, the computer on which the presentation is played back must have the video DLLs installed, or the video files will not play. Before distributing a presentation that includes video files, make sure that the video DLLs are installed on the playback computer.

When a presentation is saved as a player file, chart elements (bars, pie slices, and so on) are converted to Windows bitmap images that are animated when the presentation is played back. Because the bitmap images are larger than the original editable version of the chart elements, player files that contain charts are usually larger than the original presentation. In addition, the bitmap images use the color depth (256 colors, thousands of colors, or millions of colors) of the computer on which the presentation was saved as a player file. This can cause problems if the computer on which the presentation is played back has a lower color depth. Therefore, create the player file using the color depth of the intended playback computer. If you don't have this information, set the color depth of your computer to 256 colors before you create the player file.

Text Tips

If a presentation was created using fonts which are not present on the playback computer, Windows attempts to substitute an appropriate font when you play back the presentation. However, you may see streaking, trails or other problems if the text has motion applied to it. For best results, use fonts that you know will be present on both the authoring computer and the playback computer. The standard Windows TrueType fonts (Arial, Courier New, Symbol, Times New Roman and Wingdings) are safe choices.

When text has text motion, setting the timings to 0 doesn't remove text motion; it just makes it very fast. To remove text motion, select None in the Motion Gallery.

Using the Action! templates and the Text Motion Gallery, you should be able to create all the text motions that you want in your presentation. However, if you want to create a custom text motion from scratch, you can save yourself work by using a scene template. Simply create the text object and define the format and motion that you want for each paragraph level. When you apply the template to a scene, Action! automatically applies the formats and motion for each text level.

Palette Tips

Color palettes are imported into Action! in three ways:

- 1.) When you import a picture or a movie and Use Palette is checked in the Import dialog box
- 2.) When you use the Import Palette command
- 3.) When you use a high quality gradient. In this case, Action! generates a color palette to support the gradient.

Before importing or generating a palette, Action! checks the existing palettes, and does not import or generate a new one if it finds an exact match. Imported and generated color palettes are never discarded from an Action! presentation. You can find them using the Color panel of the Scene Options and Template Options dialog boxes.

Don't use gradient backgrounds in scenes that contain movies or high color graphics. If you do, palette conflicts can cause undesirable results.

When you import a movie into an Action! scene, the movie's palette "takes over" the palette in the scene.

This can change the colors of objects in the scene unless they use the Windows system colors. To prevent this, change the colors of the objects in your movie scene to the Windows system colors before you import the movie. The Windows system colors are in the bottom row on the Action! color palette.

Scene Sorter Tips

Use the scene sorter as a storyboarding tool. You can move scenes by dragging and dropping their thumbnail images in the scene sorter. You can also make changes to multiple scenes at once from the scene sorter.

Create dozens of new scenes in an instant. Choose Insert Scene from the Scene menu, and then type in the range of scenes to create. Multiple scenes can be easily inserted using any template or no template.

Authoring Tips

Before starting on a new project, plan ahead and pick your stage size. It's very difficult to convert a presentation from one resolution to another (for example, from an 800x600 screen resolution to 640x480) after it's been created.

Make the most of your monitor and video card. Authoring is easier in higher resolutions like 800x600 and 1024x768. If you've never changed your monitor resolution, check the manual for Windows and your video card. It's worth the effort to change to a higher resolution.

It's good practice to keep your presentations modular. If you're giving an all-day seminar, break the presentation into separate files for every 1 to 2 hour segment to keep your file size and performance at reasonable levels. Because of a global handle limit in Windows 3.1, you may occasionally run out of available memory, especially if you have other applications running simultaneously or are using a lot of charts or scenes with many bullet points in your presentation. By keeping your presentations modular, you will avoid reaching this Windows limit.

Using 24-bit (True Color) Graphics

Beware of true color pictures or large files. A tiny high color picture can slow performance as much as a huge 2MB picture. If you author in true color mode and play your presentation in 256-color mode, your presentation will run very slowly. Action! will warn you about this.

Kodak Photo CD Tip

Importing pictures is sometimes faster if you use another application to browse the Photo CD. Pick the picture, copy it to the Clipboard and then use the Paste Special command in Action!

Template Tips

If you want to keep one individual template in a template library but change the template library, rename the individual template in template view before loading the new template library. Go to template view, select the individual template, and choose Template Options. Give the template a unique name, then return to scene view and choose Load Template Library. When the new library is applied, your renamed template will still be present.

If you're using the Gridlock template, switch to outline or point-in-time view before you edit text. When you're in span-time view, the text objects are not visible.

When you change a chart template, the changes usually take effect immediately and are automatically applied to scenes that use that chart template. If you suspect that a change you made has not taken effect, click the Plot button in the chart Data Window or Chart Gallery while you're in template view in Action! This will update the chart template with your changes. Note that a new chart gallery selection does not take effect until you click on the Plot button in the gallery window.

Movie Tips

When you import a movie into an Action! presentation, it is not copied into the presentation file. Instead, Action! remembers the movie's path name: the drive, directory and file name. If Action! can't find the

movie in the expected location, it looks for it in the same directory as the presentation file. If Action! can't find the movie in either location, it displays a message to that effect. So if you plan to distribute a presentation that contains a movie or play the presentation on another computer, put the presentation file and the movie in the same directory.

Sound Tips

By default, the AVI playback mechanism sets the sound volume to 100%, which may be too loud for certain sounds. To change the sound volume, use the volume control in the Edit Digital Video dialog box.

In Action! 3.0, sounds are played from the presentation file unless they've been imported since the last Save or Save As, in which case they're played from the Windows TEMP drive. Sounds in presentations saved by Action! 2.5.1 and earlier are copied to and played from the Windows TEMP drive.

Text Tips

Action!'s text editing features are designed to help you organize the text for a single scene in a presentation. We recommend that you not attempt to paste more than a few pages of text into a text object in scene view or in the outliner.

Performance Tips

Your presentation will look snappier and move faster if you avoid having motion and effects for different objects occur at the same time. For example, your bullet points will move into position much faster if you don't have your title fading off the screen and a digital video movie playing at the same time. If object motion looks sluggish, open the timeline while you're playing the scene so that you can check the relative timing of objects. If the motion and effects for different object overlap each other, select the objects and stagger their timing a bit. Action! can move objects faster if the processor is not trying to do too many things at once.

Avoid grouping objects that do not appear on screen at the same time. If you do group them, you'll lose the performance benefits of not having their motion and effects occur simultaneously.

Disk Space Considerations

Multimedia presentation files generally become quite large. There are several approaches to minimize the size of your document on disk.

Some art and graphics tools can export standard Windows compressed DIB file format. Action! will keep the DIB in it's compressed format and request that the video driver uncompress it when loaded into video memory.

Many sound editing tools offer the options of 'down sampling' or saving the sound in a Windows standard compressed format. The Microsoft Video for Windows software that is part of this Action! release includes the capability of playing compressed sounds. 'Down sampling' is usually described in the sound tool documentation.

There are several file compression packages available. Some are shareware and others are commercial products. These usually work quite well on multimedia presentation files and can significantly reduce (sometimes by 50-60%) the disk space requirement. If you use a file compressor, you will need to decompress the file before Action! or the Action! Player can load it for playback or editing. Most of these packages support 'disk spanning' where a single large file can be saved onto several floppy disks and easily reassembled into one file when decompressed.